

Revere officers claim sexual harassment

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Two Revere police officers have served the city with a \$4.26 million complaint, charging they were routinely sexually harassed.

In a 16-page notice of claim-a precursor to a civil lawsuit - officers Terri Pechner-James and Sonia Fernandez allege they were regularly subjected to lewd, derogatory treatment - complaints two of their supervisors conceded were warranted but ultimately failed to stop.

"(We) feel that the female Officers have legitimate complaints and the police department must move immediately to correct this errant behavior," Capt. Frederick Roland and Capt. Gerald Chaulk wrote in a 1999 report.

Although the captains recommended counseling, retraining and, in some instances, transferring the offenders, the department took no action, the plaintiffs claim.

Yesterday, Mayor Thomas Ambrosino said he was "content" to have the complaints investigated by the city solicitor, who had found they had "no merit."

The complaint cites dozens of examples of alleged harassment, among them:

- Lt. Salvatore Santoro regularly made disparaging comments about female officers' bodies and "daily remarks about the length and size of his penis." In December 1998, he asked a suspect Pechner-James had gone to school with if he had ever had sex with her.

- In May 1996, Roland called Fernandez at home and asked her to come to a homicide scene in civilian clothes to translate. When she arrived wearing a baseball cap and jeans, a male officer asked if she was working as an undercover hooker.

- A female officer was speaking to a member of the public at the department's front window when, behind her, Sgt. John Nelson held up a pornographic magazine, loudly commenting on a woman's anatomy.

- In February 2001, the department's female officers came in to work to find a pair of women's underwear hung on the department bulletin board, where it remained for nearly a week, visible to the public.

- At a 1997 public forum, former Chief James Russo introduced the first women he had hired, saying, "These are not the good old days when we didn't have to hire females."

- On another occasion, Russo saw four female officers, some of them Hispanic, talking behind the station, and said, "What is this? A WIC meeting," referring to the federal program that provides food to low-income women and children.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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